

What is claimed is:

1. A system for programming a programmable device having an interface for a  
5 portable memory medium, comprising:  
    an interactive interface executable on a stand-alone computer appliance  
for creating a program for the programmable device;  
    a portable memory medium; and  
    a downloading mechanism for transferring the created program to the  
10 portable memory medium.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein the portable memory medium is a magnetic  
strip card, and the downloading mechanism is a magnetic strip writer connected to  
the computer appliance.
- 15 3. The system of claim 1 wherein the memory medium is a thumb drive having a  
USB male connector.
4. The system of claim 1 wherein the computer appliance is a personal computer  
20 (PC).
5. The system of claim 4 wherein the PC is connected to the Internet network,  
and the interactive interface is provided by a Web site in the Internet network.
- 25 6. The system of claim 4 wherein the interactive interface is read by the PC from  
a portable memory medium provided with the programmable device.
7. The system of claim 6 wherein the portable memory medium is a compact disk  
read-only medium (CD-ROM).

8. The system of claim 1 further comprising a programmable device having an interface for the portable memory medium.

5 9. The system of claim 8 wherein the portable memory medium is a magnetic strip card, and the interface is a magnetic strip card writer.

10 10. The system of claim 8 wherein the portable memory medium is a thumb drive and the interface is a female USB port for receiving the male USB connector of the thumb drive.

11. A programmable device wherein the entire programming interface comprises:  
a port for receiving a portable memory device; and  
logic for reading a program from a portable memory device engaged at the  
15 port and for transferring that program to an internal memory for execution.

12. The device of claim 9 wherein the device is one of a lawn sprinkler controller, a VCR, a thermostat, or a cellular telephone.

20 13. The device of claim 9 wherein the port for receiving is a female USB port for receiving a male USB connector of a thumb drive.

14. The device of claim 9 wherein the port for receiving is a magnetic strip reader for reading a program from a magnetic strip card.

25 15. A method for programming a programmable device, comprising acts of:  
(a) providing a sole programming interface for the device as a port for reading a portable memory medium and logic for transferring a program from the medium to an internal memory of the device;

(b) providing an interactive interface for creating a program for the programmable device, the interactive interface executable on a display of a computer appliance having a downloading mechanism for recording a program created on the portable memory medium; and

5           (c) using the portable medium for transferring the program created to the programmable device.

16. A system for programming a programmable device having an interface for receiving a program, comprising:

10           an interactive interface executable on a stand-alone computer appliance for creating a program for the programmable device; and  
            a transmitter for transmitting the program to the programmable device.

17. The system of claim 16 wherein the transmitter is an infra-red transmitter and  
15       the interface at the programmable device is an infra-red reader.

18 The system of claim 16 wherein the transmitter is a magnetic loop transmitter and the interface at the programmable device is a magnetic loop receiver.

20       19. The system of claim 16 wherein the transmitter is a radio frequency (RF) transmitter and the interface at the programmable device is an RF receiver.